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Quarter 1 of 2011 looks to be a decent quarter for seismic in Canada. We have seen the number of seismic companies reduced in 2010 through mergers and bankruptcies. However the number of crews out in January harkens back to crew numbers from a couple of years ago. Less companies doing seismic and less qualified workers will translate into some seismic not getting done this quarter. From an industry perspective hopefully that translates into work in the summer and fall this year.

In writing this column for the CSEG over the past 8 years I have written on a gamut of topics. It gives one a great appreciation for writers of daily or weekly Op-Eds. Being able to find interesting topics and not experiencing writer's block is an admirable trait.

Over the past couple of months we have begun to explore the use of social media feeds in terms of communicating more broadly and/or to a different demographic. We have posted a group on Facebook to highlight our job board postings, our magazine, and other broad interest items. We have also posted a group on Linked In to publish some of our writings more directed at the business community. Check them out.

In my June 2008 Recorder column I wrote about the price at the pump versus driving behavior. All my columns are at <https://www.cagc.ca/index.html?DISPLAY=recorder> As the price of gas has now crept past \$1.00 per litre here in Calgary these ideas once again become interesting for consideration. There are various spots on the Internet where you can check pricing across Canada. GasBuddy.com is one of the best. Looking at Calgary the [Tsuu T'ina Gas Stop](#) is generally the cheapest. Edmonton is about 3 cents per litre cheaper than Calgary. BC is about 12 cents per litre higher on average than Calgary (carbon tax and transportation). Vancouver is another 5 cents higher than the BC average (transit levy). The average for Canada is inbetween – on average about 8 cents higher than Calgary. Anyway the point to all of this and my original article was to suggest gas prices still have to double or triple to reach levels that most middle class individuals will make changes to their driving habits.

In this column I want to discuss vehicles and energy choices. Over the holidays I read an interesting column by Leah Lawrence in Oilweek. It stems from her blog writings at <http://leahlawrence.wordpress.com/>

According to Natural Resources Canada's Office of Energy Efficiency, Canadians drive their light-duty vehicles about 15,200 kilometres a year. My husband and I drive our Beetle about 22,200 kilometres a year. If I add in our motorbikes, it's about another 1,000 kilometres. This prompts the question: Are we evil?

Let's do the math. In 2008 (the most recent year for which data is available), Canadian households owned 1.5 vehicles and drove each of them 15,200 kilometres a year. That means, on average Canadian households drive 22,800 kilometres a year. Out of curiosity, I looked up the numbers for Alberta. Alberta households own 1.9 vehicles and drive them 15,600 kilometres a year for a household average of 29,640 kilometres a year.)

If the writers of all that orgasmic fantasy text in Popular Mechanics and on environmental blogs are to be believed, vehicle fuel and technology choices are unlimited. Hybrid? E85 ethanol? Electric vehicles? Natural gas? Hydrogen? No problem. Reality is somewhat different.

In my neighbourhood, the pumps have two choices: gasoline and diesel. My husband thought he might have seen an E85 station, so the other day I accosted the unsuspecting owner of a flex-fuel Chevy Yukon in a grocery store parking lot. "Where do you buy E85?" I asked. "Couldn't tell you. Maybe Ontario?"

The same is true of plug-in electric vehicles. First there is the problem of "refueling" stations. While A Better Place is building electric vehicle infrastructure in places like Israel and Japan. Places with low population densities (read Alberta) are not a priority. Also, as I noted in a comment to an earlier post, given Alberta's power comes primarily from coal, a plug-in vehicle will likely be more polluting than an equivalent gasoline vehicle, not less. (Argonne National Laboratory's GREET model estimates 15% more polluting or more.) Sorry all you Chevrolet Volt fans, I didn't mean to burst your bubble. Finally I would have mentioned High River biodiesel, but they closed their doors last month (<http://www.highrivertimes.com/ArticleDisplay.aspx?e=2878004>)

I have one of those Chevy Yukon Flex Fuel vehicles. Had to Google it - what does that mean? - E85 = Ethanol There are 4 stations in Canada = 2 in Ottawa, 1 in Guelph, 1 in Chatham. The downside of the fuel is it has much poorer energy output than gas - so you will fill up about twice as often - and \$\$\$ in fuel about the same given filling up more often.

The Oil and Gas Industry is pushing for Natural Gas as a bridge fuel for climate change purposes. ATCO has 12 stations in Alberta - 3 in Calgary - http://www.atcogas.com/About_NG/NGV/Alberta%20Public%20Stations.pdf They say fast fill too however I am not sure what that means. One of the original knocks against NG was how slow fueling was - i.e. 20 minutes - the one home refueling company in Canada (based in Ontario) went bankrupt.

Electrical - also interesting = a city electrical engineer out of Toronto said if everyone plugged in at night it would take the grid down. But I suppose it will be years to ramp up and things will change in infrastructure. Electrical batteries are generally only good for short distances - most are 60 Km range (like the Volt) - maybe good for city driving. Another downside is that expensive battery packs when having to be replaced. Anyways I guess it will all get cheaper with technology advancements.

And the challenge with friendlier environmental vehicles tends to be the cost - the additional cost takes 5+ years of fuel savings to break even. But I read somewhere that renewables need about \$100 / bbl Oil to start to be on par - and we are getting close once again.

From the Thursday Files

Public opinion rarely considers the needs of the next generation or the history of the last. It is frequently hampered by myths and misinformation, by stereotypes and shibboleths, and by an innate resistance to innovation.

- **Theodore C. Sorensen, 1928-2010, *presidential advisor, lawyer, and writer***